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UNCLAS AMMAN 002634

SIPDIS

SENSITIVE

FOR DS A/S TAYLOR, H A/S KELLY, NEA A/S BURNS

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [ASEC](#) [JO](#) [OREP](#) [OTRA](#) [OVIP](#) [PREL](#)

SUBJECT: SECURITY IN JORDAN AND VIP VISITS

REF: A. STATE 74372

[B](#). AMMAN 2594

(SBU) I am very concerned about the security threat posed to the large and growing volume of USG VIPs traveling to and through Jordan. Reftel A makes a convincing case that we are entering a period of sustained, prolonged, and grave al-Qaeda threats to U.S. interests. Ref. B references the recent steps Jordanian authorities have taken against an apparent Zargawi/al-Qaeda operation to target critical facilities in Jordan, including the American Embassy. As a Muslim Arab state and forthright supporter of U.S. policy in the region, Jordan is a particularly desirable al-Qaeda target, tarred as an apostate regime.⁸ The general and Jordan-specific threat environment is juxtaposed against the swelling numbers of VIP and other travelers transiting Jordan) almost inevitably spending one or multiple nights in Amman's five-star hotels, which are exceptionally vulnerable soft targets.

(SBU) In the next two weeks, we have ten codels and two senior military delegations visiting Jordan. The country team and I know well the importance of providing unstinting support to these visits. Their success is crucial to advancing U.S. foreign policy interests. But the reality is that in this threat environment, we do not have the resources) especially FAVs and LAVs) to move this volume of visitors around Jordan with the safety the Emergency Action Committee (EAC) believes is warranted. Furthermore, the vulnerability of hotels, by their very nature, is difficult to alter. It is critical that the security conditions outlined in refs A and B, the latest Department public announcements on security, and these particular concerns be relayed directly to prospective codels and Hill leadership, and that they carefully reevaluate their travel plans, to include consideration of other nearby states which could provide staging ground for trips to Iraq.

(SBU) Without a doubt, VIPs who decide to visit Jordan will continue to receive the very best support this Embassy can muster. However, the threat to soft targets) Amman's hotels) is very real. I must be and am equally concerned about the safety and security of my own staff. Supporting a codel requires mobilizing a sizeable number of Embassy staff in and around the hotels, to provide control and hospitality rooms as well as motor pool support. I cannot in good conscience order any employee to undertake any activity that jeopardizes his or her life. We have not reached that stage, but we could so with little notice.

GNEHM